

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION ARA-14

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R 291211Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8077
INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 5074

E.O. 11652: NGDS
TAGS: SHUM, BR
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON SAO PAULO CARDINAL ARNS

1. SUMMARY. CARDINAL ARNS, DURING AMBASSADOR'S COURTESY CALL ON JUNE 23, SAID THAT BRAZIL IS MAKING PROGRESS IN CORRECTING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES. HOWEVER, HE EMPHASIZED THE JOB THAT REMAINS TO BE DONE AND HIS APPREHENSION WITH RESPECT TO GENERAL FIGUEIREDO. END SUMMARY.

2. CARDINAL ARNS STATED THAT THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN BRAZIL HAS IMPROVED. THE MILITARY HAD TURNED OVER THE HANDLING OF PRISONERS TO THE POLICE. IT HAD BEEN MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO PINPOINT RESPONSIBILITY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES WHEN THE MILITARY WERE DOING THE TORTURING. NOW, WITH THE POLICE IN CHARGE OF ARRESTS AND INTERROGATION, THE SITUATION IS EASIER. THE CARDINAL EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SHIFT FROM MILITARY TO POLICE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ARRESTS. THE POLICE LIVE IN THE COMMUNITY AND CANNOT WITHSTAND DENUNCIATIONS OF INCORRECT BEHAVIOR WITH PRISONERS. "THE MILITARY WERE ANONYMOUS." THE CARDINAL STATED THAT

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THERE WAS STILL A GREAT DEAL OF ABUSE OF PRISONERS, MOSTLY OF POOR OR MIDDLE CLASS PERSONS ACCUSED OF COMMON CRIMES WHO DID NOT KNOW HOW TO DEFEND THEMSELVES LEGALLY. HE CLAIMED THAT TORTURE APPARATUS WAS INSTALLED IN STATE POLICE HEADQUARTERS AND EVEN IN SOME PRECINCT OFFICES. HE AFFIRMED THAT TORTURE WAS NOT THE POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT, BUT HE INSINUATED

IT WAS CARRIED OUT WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE. HE WAS CRITICAL OF GOVERNOR OF SAO PAULO FOR NOT EXERCISING LEADERSHIP. HE CREDITED HIM WITH POLITICAL SENSITIVITY BUT NOT ENOUGH FOLLOW THROUGH.

3. THE CARDINAL STATED THAT HE WOULD SOON GO TO VIENNA FOR A HUMAN RIGHTS WEEK. HE HAD BEEN ASKED TO EXPLAIN THE NATURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN BRAZIL AND, TOGETHER WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, WOULD WORK OUT WAYS IN WHICH PEOPLE IN OTHER COUNTRIES CAN HELP, WITHOUT INVOLVING GOVERNMENTS. HE SAID THAT THE PUBLICATION OF NAMES OF ARRESTED PERSONS BY THE PRESS ABROAD HAD BEEN AN EFFECTIVE WAY OF OBLIGING THE GOVERNMENT TO ADMIT TO ARRESTS AND ALLOW THE PRISONER HIS LEGAL GUARANTEES. HE THOUGHT THAT THIS INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE WAS, BY AND LARGE, NO LONGER NECESSARY IN BRAZIL. THE BRAZILIAN INTERNAL SITUATION HAD EVOLVED TO THE POINT WHERE INTERESTED PARTIES HAD ENOUGH LEGAL RESOURCES AND THE FORCE OF PUBLIC OPINION THROUGH AN UNCENSORED PRESS TO COMBAT ABUSES WITH ITS OWN MEANS. THIS WAS ANOTHER WAY IN WHICH THE BRAZILIAN HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION HAD IMPROVED.

4. CARDINAL ARNS RECALLED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE IN THE DAYS WHEN THE BRAZILIAN PRESS COULD NOT WRITE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES. A NETWORK CONFIDENTIAL

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HAD BEEN BUILT UP, OPERATING PRINCIPALLY OUT OF LONDON AND PARIS, WHICH COULD PUT THE NEWS OF AN ARREST IN OVER 100 PAPERS THE NEXT DAY. THE PRESSURE OFTEN REGISTERED IN THE GOB AS QUICKLY. THE CARDINAL SAID THAT THE PRESS IN THE US AND CANADA ALSO COOPERATED, BUT HIS STRONGEST CONNECTIONS WERE WITH EUROPE. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED WHETHER THERE WAS SUPPORT IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY AND JAPAN. THE CARDINAL SAID THESE COUNTRIES AND CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THEM HAD NOT BEEN VERY SUPPORTIVE.

5. IN DISCUSSING GENERAL FIGUEIREDO, THE CARDINAL COMPARED HIM UNFAVORABLY WITH PRESIDENT GEISEL. THE PRESIDENT, IN THE CARDINAL'S VIEW, WAS AT LEAST AN INTELLIGENT AND RESPECTED FIGURE, EVEN IF HE WERE OF AN AUTHORITARIAN BENT. CARDINAL ARNS DESCRIBED FIGUEIREDO AS EMOTIONAL, NOT INTELLIGENT: "FIGUEIREDO HAS A 'NARROW GAUGE' MIND. HE HAS NOT SHOWN HIMSELF TO BE CLEVER IN POLITICAL MATTERS--WOULD THAT HE WERE*" FIGUEIREDO'S LIMITATIONS PLACE A GREAT EMPHASIS ON THE MEN HE CHOOSES AS HIS ADVISORS, STATED THE CARDINAL. AND HIS CHOICES SO FAR ARE NOT ENCOURAGING. FIGUEIREDO

WILL HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME GOVERNING, IN THE CARDINAL'S VIEW: HE LACKS THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE; ARENA, THE GOVERNMENT PARTY, IS INDIFFERENT TOWARD HIM; AND THE MILITARY IS DIVIDED.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BRASILIA 5074

6. THE CARDINAL SAID THAT HE KNEW CYRUS VANCE BETTER THAN HE DID PRESIDENT CARTER, SINCE HE HAD BEEN ON A RETREAT WITH VANCE IN ITALY SEVERAL YEARS AGO. THE CARDINAL MENTIONED IN PASSING THAT HE HAD RECENTLY RECEIVED (THROUGH THE CONSULATE) A LETTER FROM THE CARTER FAMILY. (COMMENT: THE TEXT OF THE LETTER WAS RELEASED BY THE CARDINAL AFTER THE AMBASSADOR'S VISIT AND PUBLISHED IN O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO.) THE CARDINAL ASKED WHETHER PRESIDENT CARTER HAD SET A DATE FOR A VISIT TO THE POPE. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT HE DID NOT KNOW. THE CARDINAL SUGGESTED THAT, WHEN THE PRESIDENT DOES VISIT THE POPE, IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR HIM TO MENTION THAT IT WOULD BE GOOD IF THE CHURCH WOULD SPEAK WITH A STRONGER, MORE UNIFIED VOICE, ON HUMAN RIGHTS. (COMMENT: THE CARDINALS OF RIO DE JANEIRO, PORTO ALEGRE AND SALVADOR, AS WELL AS THE MAJORITY IN THE BRAZILIAN COUNCIL OF BISHOPS HOLD TO A LESS MILITANT VIEW OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION AND THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN GENERAL THAN DOES CARDINAL ARNS (E.G. SEE CONVERSATION WITH PAPAL NUNCIO ROCCO IN BRASILIA 4622). ARNS MAY BE LOOKING FOR POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR HIS POSITION IN HIS SUGGESTION TO THE PRESIDENT.)

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7. ON THE REFORMS, WHICH WERE ANNOUNCED BY PRESIDENT GEISEL THE SAME DAY AS THE AMBASSADOR'S CONVERSATION WITH CARDINAL ARNS, HE SAID THAT THEY WERE A BEGINNING, BUT EMPHASIZED THAT THERE WERE MANY AREAS LEFT UNTOUCHED IN THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL. (COMMENT: HE WAS NOT SPECIFIC ON WHAT THESE WERE BUT WE ASSUME HE MEANS DIRECT ELECTIONS OF GOVERNORS AND SENATORS.

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